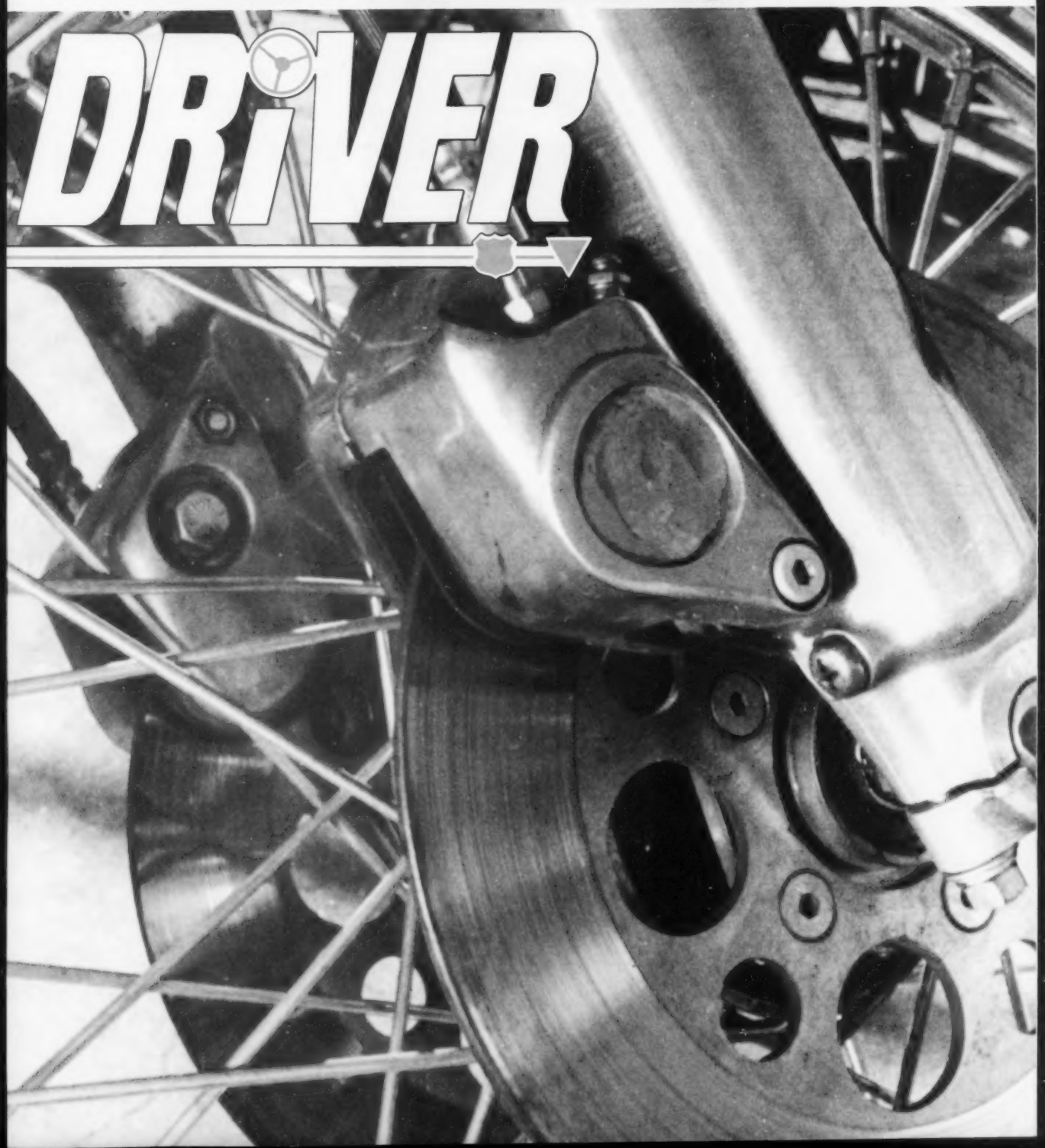
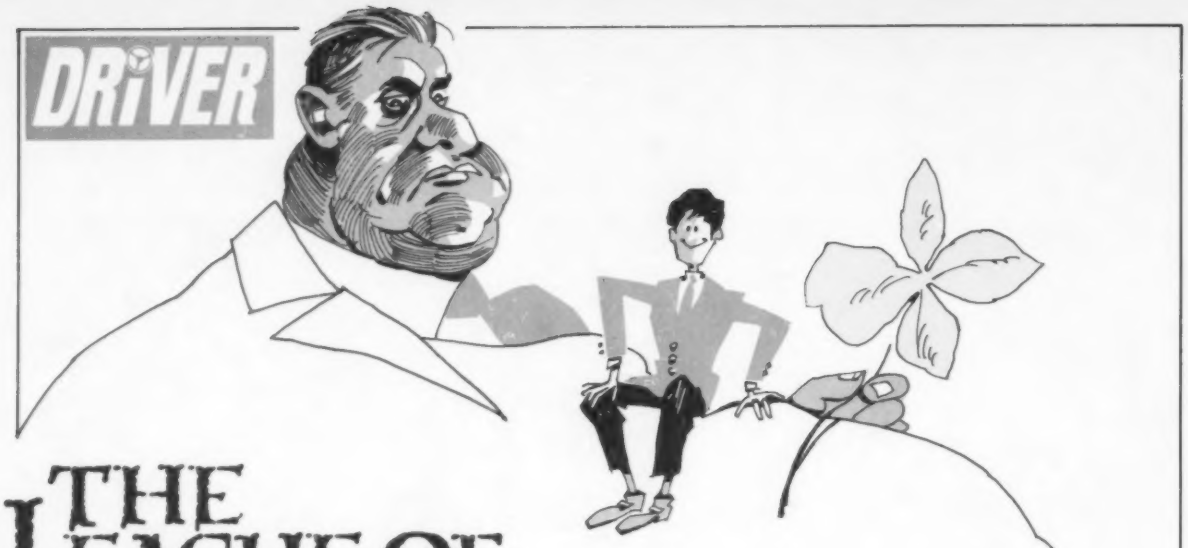
FEBRUARY 1983

Ground Hog

MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE

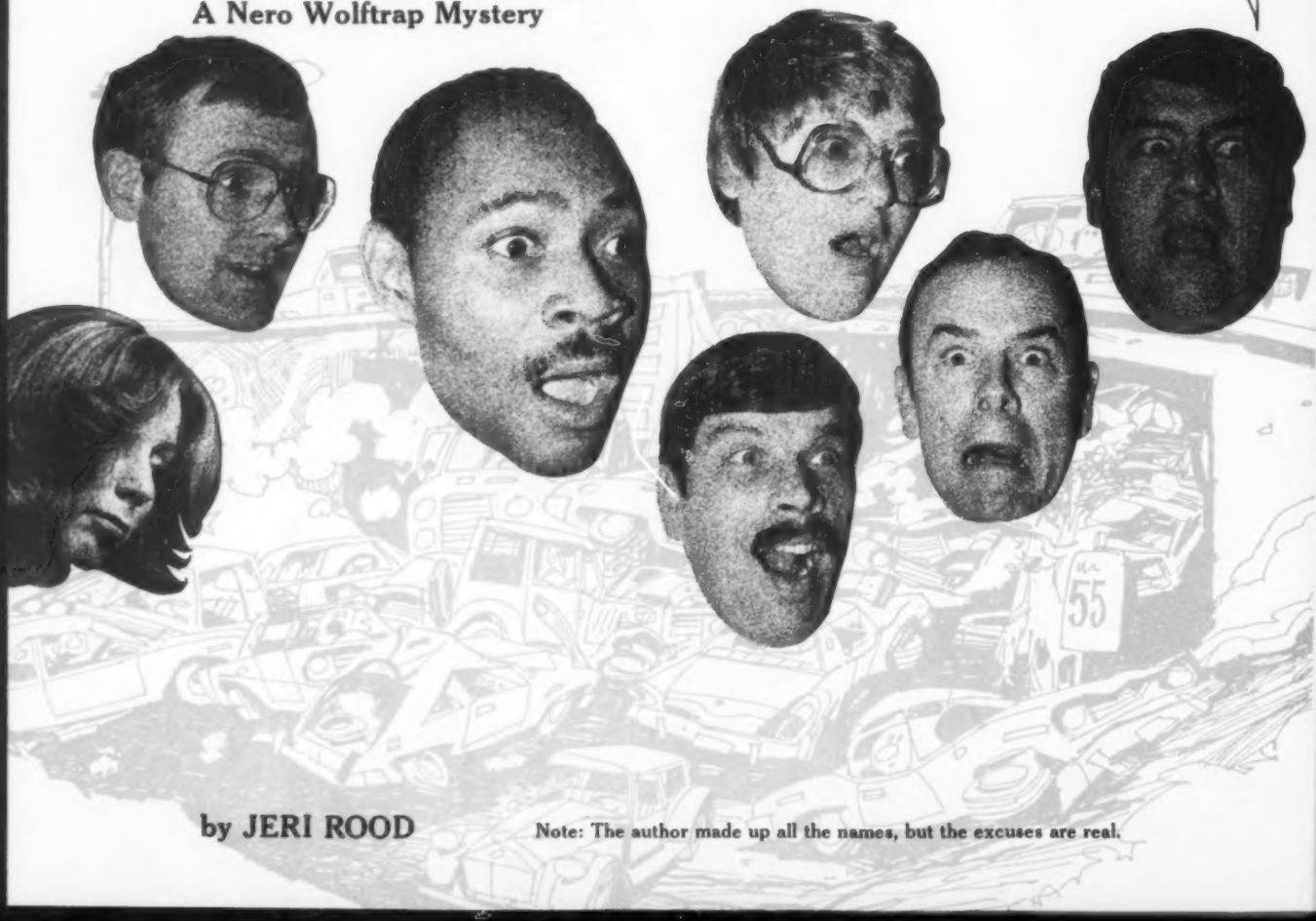
DRIVER





THE LEAGUE OF FRIGHTENED DRIVERS

A Nero Wolftrap Mystery



by JERI ROOD

Note: The author made up all the names, but the excuses are real.

Dedicated to the memory of Rex Stout,
with profound apologies to Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin

The problem was pretty immense, but no more so than the man being hired to solve it.

Scowling, Nero Wolftrap settled his fifth of a ton back in his oversized chair and folded his hands over the midpoint of his huge middle. Then he said something that surprised our prospective client. "You waste my time, sir."

Ralph Bricklin, the well-dressed little man in the red leather guest chair said, "But all I want is for you to tell me and my friends how we can avoid dying or being injured in automobile accidents. That surely won't take much time for a detective of your towering intellect."

I thought he'd cinched it, stroking Wolftrap's towering ego like that. Wolftrap hates to work almost as much as he hates to miss a meal, even though I do all the work and he sits at home and thinks, so it takes a strong lure to get him to take a case. At my desk, I rustled some papers, both to annoy Wolftrap and to signal him that the man's money would find a spacious home in our largely empty bank account.

Wolftrap caught the meaning but he evidently didn't care for the man despite the compliment, because he tried to get rid of him.

"Your answer is simple, Mr. Bricklin. You either avoid riding in automobiles at all times, or you restrain yourself within the automobile so that if an accident should occur you will be unharmed."

"You mean a seatbelt?"

"Precisely."

Obviously, Wolftrap's answer was not what Bricklin wanted because he started making things complicated.

"Well, I wear mine of course, but 50,000 people die every year in car crashes."

"I am aware of this fact. I read the newspapers," said Wolftrap testily. "What of it?"

"Well, seatbelts are too simple a solution to save all of those lives."

"To save all, yes. If you wish to save all, my first answer is the only possible solution. An automobile collision offers peril only to those who go driving."

"We have to drive."

"Then you must also accept the risk of accidents. Who is 'we'? Are you now asking me to save all 50,000 car accident victims?"

"Well, not exactly. A lot of my friends and co-workers are worried about the chance of those accidents. What with 50,000 people dying every year, we think one of us might be next. One of our group has rather jokingly called us the League of Avoidance. That's what we want to do, avoid accidents."

"I never leave this house on business," said Wolftrap. "My associate Mr. Woodwind will interview this league of yours and he will report back to me." He turned his eyes to me. "Archie, get a list of Mr. Bricklin's friends and speak with them."

After giving Wolftrap a check sufficient to pay all the bills for two months in Wolftrap's brownstone on West 34th Street, our client left.

Wolftrap wasn't kidding about never leaving the house on business. In fact he rarely travels anywhere in a car without dire need.

Actually, with his gargantuan food intake, he doesn't need the additional danger of motoring. I always thought he would more likely die from heart disease or clogged arteries than from an auto accident.

Anyway, if you saw him you'd understand. First, most cars wouldn't be able to hold a person weighing that much. Our own town car had to be specially built in order to stand the strain on the suspension, and even in that car Wolftrap has to sit in the center of the back seat so we don't overturn to one side or the other.

But mostly it's a matter of seatbelts. There isn't a stock belt to be found anywhere that can go around his immensity. We had them specially made for him. Wolftrap has two unbreakable rules. One is that nobody but me can drive him anywhere because he doesn't trust anyone else's driving, and even mine disturbs him. The other is that he will never allow the car to start until he and I have both buckled up.

So I knew he'd be fascinated at the reasons people have for neglecting to

continued

DRIVER

THE
TRAFFIC SAFETY MAGAZINE
FOR THE MILITARY DRIVER

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HQ AIR FORCE INSPECTION AND SAFETY CENTER
Norton Air Force Base, California 92409

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY IN COOPERATION
WITH
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
AND
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

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AFRP 127-1

Entered as a publication at the Second-Class rate (USPS No. 586-430) at San Bernardino Postal Service, 1331 South E Street, San Bernardino, CA 92403.

SUBSCRIPTION — DRIVER is published monthly and is available for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. Back issues are not available. Changes in subscription mailings should be sent to the above address. Use of funds for printing this publication has been approved by Headquarters, United States Air Force, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C. No payment can be made for manuscripts submitted for publication. Contributions are welcome, as are comments and criticism. Address all correspondence to the Editor, DRIVER Magazine, HQ AFISC/SEDD, Norton AFB, CA 92409.

Distribution: One copy for every 9 members of USAF.

ATTENTION DEPT OF THE NAVY PERSONNEL: Address all queries concerning distribution to NAVSAFECEN, NAS NORFOLK, VA 23511, Attn: Safety Publications Dept. All other correspondence will be welcomed by the Editor.

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VOLUME 16 NUMBER 9

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THE EDITOR SPEAKS

DOUBLE CLUTCH

COMING NEXT MONTH:

There are three basic rules to driving high performance cars on public roads: 1) stay within 80 percent of the vehicle's and your capabilities; 2) stay on your side of the centerline; and 3) be courteous to all other traffic. Take a ride in the 1984 Corvette with DRIVER next month to learn the details of Safe High Performance Car Driving.

the league of frightened drivers

continued

use their seatbelts. I took Bricklin's list and left.

Over the next three days I developed a standard pattern for the interviews. I introduced myself as "Archie Woodwind, associate of Nero Wolftrap," explained the connection to their friend Bricklin and then asked how they spelled safety, hoping to get "s-e-a-t-b-e-l-t." Actually, it was more charming than that, but it needn't have been based on the reactions I got.

There wasn't much variety in those reactions, nor much warmth either. Despite talking to dozens of people, I got only a few stock answers when I asked why they didn't use their seatbelts. I could go into detail, as I did in my reports to Wolftrap, but why make you as bored as I got? A few of the better examples will be enough, and their answers may give you a laugh or two.

Thomas Wilcox had an apathetic attitude that was all too common.

"It's just too much trouble to fasten the seatbelt," he said, munching morosely on some sort of health food bar. "It takes too much time."

To me that was like saying it was too much trouble to tie your shoelaces, but I let it pass.

"Look," I said. "It takes maybe five seconds to fasten a seatbelt, and much less when you make it a habit and get coordination."

"Are you saying I'm uncoordinated?"

"No. Just that buckling gets easier with practice and becomes no trouble at all. Like turning out a light when you leave a room. Do it a few times and it becomes so automatic you aren't conscious of doing it."

"Yeah, well, I'll think about it," he said.

"You do that," I said, knowing he wouldn't.

Ellen Warner was very friendly and nice when I found her at the supermarket, but she could seem to be listening when she really wasn't.

"I always wear them on long trips, like when I'm going on a superhighway. For just a short trip to the store I don't bother."

I asked why. She said, "On a short trip you aren't going that fast."

I asked if that meant slow speeds are less dangerous and she said yes. "I suppose you might have a point if you could choose where your accident would happen," I said, "But you can't. If you could choose, you'd choose to skip the whole thing. The truth is, more cars crash on streets than on freeways. Do you know the most dangerous single place for car accidents?" She said no. "The intersection. You're much more likely to mash in your grillwork at an intersection than on a freeway. Most accidents happen within 25 miles of home, too."

She was so impressed with those arguments that she put the groceries in the trunk, ignored the belt and drove off.

I was so impressed with those arguments that I used them over and over. Nobody liked them as much as I did.

A big guy named Chris Fields could put television writer on his resume, since he had no feeling for reality.

"I don't believe in those things," he said. "I know it's better to be thrown clear of the car. Then I could roll with the impact and be okay."

"Either you've seen too many

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movies or you don't know how fragile the human body is," I said. He was another one of those who'd heard about some freak mishap in which somebody was thrown out and lived. The fact is that more often — say, 99.9 percent of the time — they die.

I told him that and explained. "First, you'll have to go through the window or the windshield to be thrown clear, which will hurt enough in itself. Even if you survive that you'll hit the ground or pavement. Then you have a good chance of being hit by another car or crushed by your own car.

"When you're flying around outside the car you're moving too fast to even think about rolling with the impact. The whole force of the crash will have to be absorbed by your body, which wasn't designed for it. If you're inside the car, the car will absorb the impact, and that force will be transmitted to you by a scientifically designed restraint system. Far better to hit a nylon belt than concrete, I think."

He didn't look very convinced, and in fact told me I was entitled to my opinion.

I was beginning to feel like a pollster asking who would win the presidential race three weeks after it was over, and Dewey was still ahead.

Fred Marks, tall and handsome, had a way of smiling as though you had an ink smudge on your nose and he knew it and you didn't. I wasn't intimidated, and it threw him.

"Oh, I don't wear the belts," he told me. "I'm pretty strong. I can hold myself away from the dash by bracing against the steering wheel."

"Maybe," I said. "If you're going less than 5 miles per hour. Any faster than that and your mass is too great. In a crash at, say, 30 mph your body will hit the wheel and the dash with a force equal to about 30 times your own weight. You're about 175, so that's 5240 pounds. Can you lift 5240 pounds?"

He said he didn't believe me. I guess he thought I was insulting his strength.

I went on. "Ever been on those amusement park rides where you get pushed toward the outside of the cage by the centrifugal force? It's a little like that. The faster you go, the heavier you feel."

I thought that one was pretty good. A crude illustration, but effective. It had the effect of making Marks smile again. I told him about the ink smudge on his nose and he left to find a mirror.

There were a lot more people but the same lines. Sometime during that first day I phoned Wolftrap to tell him I could better spend my time catching butterflies in the park. I reported a few things and his one-word response was "Excellent."

"There is a murderer stalking these people, Archie," he said. "Its name is negligence."

By the end of that day, I was getting annoyed with these people. They were quoting the dumbest excuses I could imagine for neglecting to take care of themselves. I went to the office and gave Wolftrap the interviews word for word from a few notes, as I'd trained myself over the years. He said "Excellent" again and told me to continue with the list the next day. I had a feeling he'd already reached a conclusion and it annoyed me, but I couldn't get him to open up.

The next day was more of the same. A few examples:

I met Martin Strauss on his way out of his office, so we talked on the way to the parking lot. Logic and he had never been introduced, and it was logic's gain.

"I don't wear a seatbelt," he said. "I'm a good driver."

"So am I, but I wear mine all the time. I know I'm good but it's those other guys I'm worried about. If they make a mistake and hit me, I'll suffer just like I would if I made the error."

Then he turned fatalistic on me. "When my number's up, I'll go, so there's no point in worrying about it."

"There's no point in helping things along," I said. "The way I look at it, if you don't take precautions you're controlling the odds. Against yourself."

He changed the subject by offering to drive me to my next appointment. I noticed he didn't buckle up. He noticed I did.

"What's the matter?" he said. "Don't you trust my driving?"

I could tell he was really insulted, so I kept the sarcasm out of my voice as much as I could. "Oh, yes sir," I said. "But somebody might hit you and —"

I stopped because he'd turned up the radio.

Joseph Bowman wasn't really spoiling for a fight, but a few hours in the refrigerator might have helped him.

"Those belts are uncomfortable. They rub on my neck and confine me."

"They're supposed to be confining," I said. "They're supposed to keep your body inside the car, and your face away from the instrument panel. But as for comfort, you can adjust them so they feel snug but not tight. The belts from years ago were much less adjustable, and that's probably what you're thinking of."

"No. I'm thinking about all belts. I need to be able to move around."

"That's exactly what you don't need. If you get in a crash you get knocked around like a billiard ball and that's what causes all the injuries. They call it the second colli-

"There is a murderer stalking these people, Archie . . . its name is negligence"

sion. The car crunches against a tree or a car and you keep moving until you hit something that stops you. Trouble is, steering wheels and windshields are much too hard for head-bashing. Seatbelts will absorb the impact with a much softer barrier. You can do whatever you like. Me, I'd prefer a belt over eating the oil pressure gauge."

Maybe I was too glib for him because he got very angry with me. He jabbed his finger in my chest. "Hey, turkey! Get off my back! If I don't want to wear 'em I'm not hurting anybody but myself."

"Wrong again, bozo." I was becoming a little hot myself. I don't like being jabbed. "If you get knocked around in a crash you'll collide with any other people in the car, injuring them even if they were smarter than you and belted themselves in. It's like the billiards game. The cue stick and the cue ball are like the two cars. They collide and the cue ball hits another ball, which is like you hitting the interior of the car. Then that ball hits another ball, which is like you hitting another passenger." I liked the billiards analogy. It pleased me to find it so appropriate.

He proved it was more appropriate than I thought when he scowled and stormed away. I figured his head and the billiard ball were made out of the same material, but I couldn't see under his hat for the colored stripe and the number.

An attractive, well-dressed woman named Lillian Stephens had what I thought was the prize response.

"They wrinkle my clothing."

"Pardon me," I said, "but that doesn't seem very important compared to ensuring your safety."

Apparently she didn't hear me. She went on patiently. "I spend a lot of time on my appearance and I spend a lot of money on my clothes. I don't want them mussed up."

"You probably have a lot of time and money invested in your teeth too. One bad accident could leave a lot of them sticking in the steering wheel."

That was too abrupt and the fact that I was right didn't make her receive it any better. She marched away stiffly. More tactful remarks to others with this excuse didn't help, though.

When I got home, Wolftrap had already gone to bed. That suited me. If he considered these people's excuses excellent I wanted no part of him. I felt like a salesman for a brand of toothpaste that everybody bought but nobody used. "Yes, we know it will cut down on cavities, Mr. Woodwind, but in order to use it we have to brush, and toothbrushing causes bursitis of the elbow."

I had a sandwich and milk in the kitchen and went up to bed.

The next morning I decided to rush through the interviews and then maybe come home and resign, or else lock Wolftrap in his elevator. Either one sounded good.

I went off for more "excellent" conversations with our client's friends. They all had non-informed opinions, based on . . . I don't know what they were based on, maybe Peter Pan.

Vincent Forte seemed reasonable enough. I could tell because he didn't frown until I got to the sentence on buckling up. But it wasn't a frown of annoyance; it was more a frown of concern.

"What if they don't work? I'd be killed."

"You'd wear them if you were sure they'd work?" I was interested now.

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Maybe this one was listening.

"Yeah, I think so. But I'd like to know, you know?"

I told him I knew. At my suggestion, we got in his car and buckled up. We found a deserted road and he accelerated to a moderate speed and stomped on the brake. The car stopped, and so did we as the belts' locking mechanisms worked and held us in place.

"There's a pendulum device built into the car that is motion-sensitive. If the car slows or changes direction quickly, the pendulum moves and locks the belts. It'll work in an emergency." This was more like it Action. He was paying attention Maybe he was being convinced.

"I don't know. Maybe . . ." He didn't sound at all sure, but I decided not to push it. His was the most positive reaction I'd got yet and I wanted to enjoy it a while.

Gina Paulson was a fine example of devotion to an idea, no matter how badly thought out.

"I could get trapped unconscious in a burning car or under the water if I wore my belts."

That one stopped me for a second. I couldn't believe I'd heard it. "You mean if you were unconscious without the belt you could get out?"

"Yes. I mean no . . . that is . . ."

"Belts hold you in place in your seat so you have better control in emergency maneuvers like panic stops or quick turns. In an accident they hold you in place so you're less likely to kiss the windshield or put your head through the roof. So you're less likely to be knocked unconscious. By the way, a burning or submerged car happens in only a fraction of a percent of all accidents."

She wouldn't budge. "But the seat-belt might jam and I'd be stuck."

"No. They're very simple devices. Just push the release button and you're out."

She tried to convince me mechanical devices can't be trusted. I decided she was already unconscious and considered telling her she shouldn't drive in that condition, but dropped it and went for some food.

Robert Barrow had an unfriendly expression that lost four degrees of warmth when I told him who I was and made the suggestion.

"Bricklin's crazy," he said. "Those belts are dangerous. I could be injured by them in a crash."

"Injured?" I said. "Maybe some minor bruises but nothing more."

"How about cracked ribs or something?"

"If the impact is great enough for the belt to hurt you, you'd be far worse off without it. What's the choice? A belt in the stomach or a faceful of windshield glass."

"I don't know. I just don't like the idea of that strap across my chest."

"Far better that than a steering wheel crease across your forehead."

"You think you're pretty smart, don't you?" His unfriendly look had gone down another six or seven degrees.

"I know how to take care of myself."

"So do it and leave me alone."

I didn't have Wolftrap's okay to crack ribs or crease foreheads so I left him alone.

Julia Greene was as impatient with me as I was with her. With that kind of understanding, we got along fine.

"Seatbelts just get in the way. I can't reach things in the car when I'm buckled in."

That was 14 times on that excuse.

"You're supposed to be driving, not digging in your purse," I said. When you need to reach for something, stop the car, release the belt and go for it. Then buckle up again and drive."

"You don't know how inconvenient that would be." Her tone showed her pity for the poor dumb detective, but I didn't care.

When I failed to offer an opinion on her knowledge of driving, I knew I'd had it. I went home early on that third day and reported at length to Wolftrap.

"All this doesn't make sense to me," I said as I concluded.

"It is indicative," he said, and before I could ask him what it indicated, he told me to call them all and have them here in the office at six. Then he left to go up to the plant rooms on the roof. It was four o'clock.

I did a lot of furious dialing and had them there at six when he descended.

I'd arranged the guests to Wolftrap's specifications. They were all seated so he didn't have to look up at anyone and all within a narrow angle so he didn't have to turn his head too far to the left or right.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began. "You have all expressed, through Mr. Bricklin, a desire to avoid decease or injury resulting from mishaps in automobiles. This is rational and understandable. You have asked me and Mr. Woodwind to suggest ways to enable such avoidance, and I am now prepared to respond.

"But first I must express amazement and horror that you will not employ the simplest device available for your protection. Mr. Woodwind's reports of his conversations with you were full of the most asinine arguments imaginable. Far from being rational reasons for avoiding the use of the automotive safety belt, they were excuses of the silliest kind. They were not fully thought out reasons.

"This lack of thought suggests a partial explanation of the problem.

". . . Many other drivers do not believe they will be hurt. They have the mistaken idea they are immortal"

Why do you fail to think about the real issues, the real danger of accidents, and about the foolishness of your own excuses? Because you are, quite simply, afraid. You are afraid of the possibility of car crashes, and therefore you would prefer not to think at all. So you give reasons that are so easily demolished by even so ordinary an intellect as Mr. Woodwind."

I decided to put ketchup on his lamb kidneys for that one. The assembled group began to mutter. They thought they were being insulted. Wolftrap raised a palm at them.

"Do not misunderstand. I share your fear of accidents in traffic, and I feel it is a fear that is justifiable. Where we differ is in our answer to that fear. You prefer not to think about it. I avoid the danger whenever I can, but if I must ride in an automobile I use a safety belt.

"Once you take some action to avoid the thing you fear, you are merely showing a wise respect for an actual hazard. So you see, fear can be a positive thing.

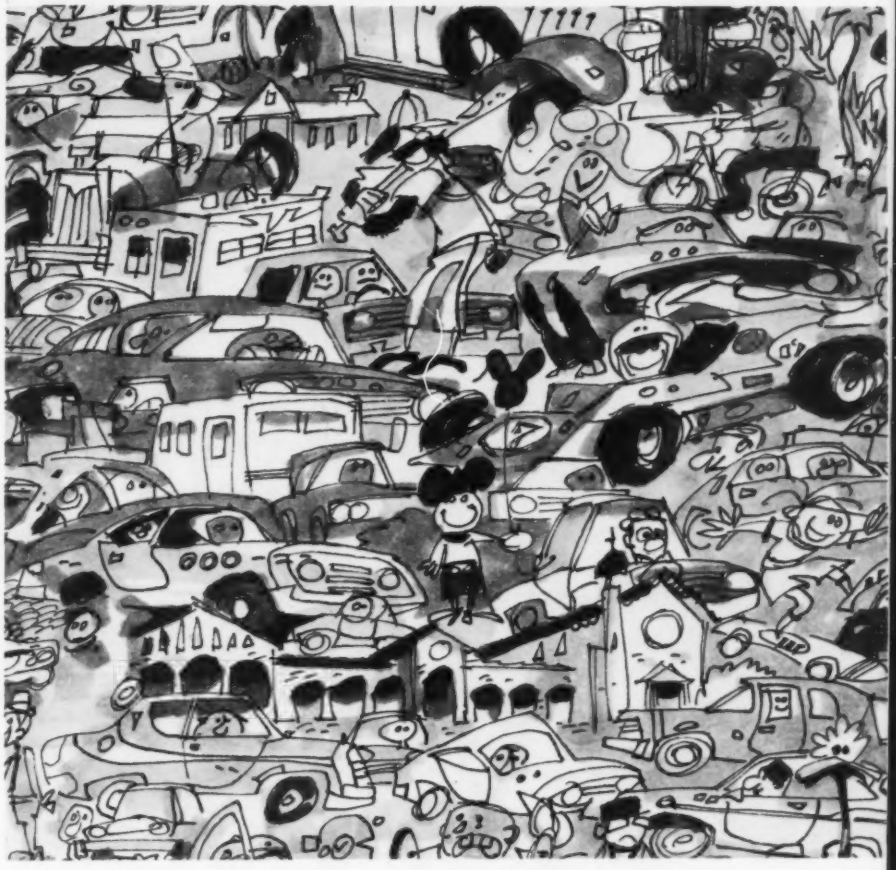
"You men and women could be called a League of Frightened Drivers, but that is good. Many other drivers do not believe they will be hurt. They have the mistaken idea they are immortal. Or if they recognize the danger they feel it will go away if they do not think about it. As though thinking about a thing will give it substance and ignoring it will obliterate that reality. These people are a League of Foolish Drivers.

"But you people are at least cognizant of the danger. Now to be successful in the venture for which you hired me I must rely on your active participation. You must take action; you must use those belts. Lacking such cooperation, I am powerless. If you do not wish to take such a simple precaution to save your health and perhaps your lives, I cannot help you."

The league broke up into small groups and argued among themselves. A cautious voice somewhere in the room got their attention.

"I use my belts when I think of it, but I don't always remember. How can I do that?"

I was about to speak up but Wolftrap was ready for that one. "Merely make the wearing of the belt a habit. Buckle it faithfully each time you get into the car for one week and it will likely become a habit and you will feel uncomfortable without it. Make a reminder for yourself, such as a note taped on the dashboard of the car. Attach the belt before you turn the ignition key."



After more arguing the league agreed that Wolftrap had fulfilled his contract and they left. I could tell they weren't too satisfied by the outcome. When we were alone I told Wolftrap so.

"They were dissatisfied because they were looking for a more complex solution," he said.

"Like air bags or crushable interior parts, or what?"

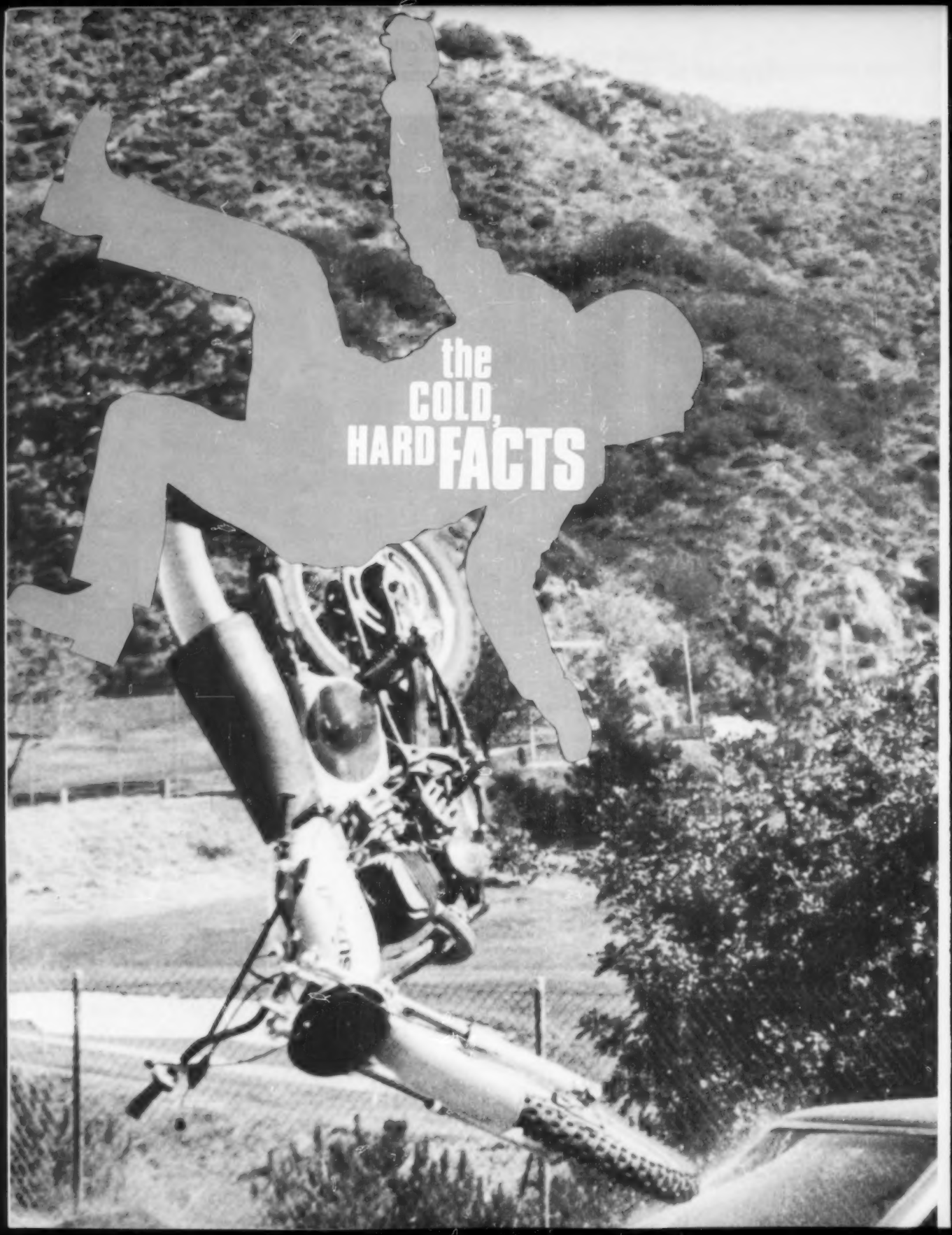
"Perhaps those. Certainly they were not looking for so simple and commonplace a solution. They see the safety belt as a meager device to save them from death or disability. Actually that simple nylon strap is far stronger and more effective than they imagine, and in most cases is enough to ensure their continued survival and well-being."

"The best possible defense mechanism?" I suggested, pleased with my play on words.

"Apt, and certainly a much more accurate usage of the term than the psychological one."

He raised his bulk to standing position and left for the dining room.

I felt good. That had been quite a compliment. Maybe I wouldn't pour ketchup on his dinner after all.


the
COLD,
HARD FACTS

There's no sense sugar coating the facts: 51 Air Force personnel took their last motorcycle rides *ever* in 1982. That's right, 44 motorcycle operators and seven passengers were killed in 49 motorcycle accidents last year. That makes 1982 the second worst year on record for U.S. Air Force personnel on motorcycles.

The 49 fatal motorcycle accidents had a lot of things in common. It was the young, untrained and inexperienced riders who were in most accidents.

Of the 51 people killed, 43 were under 25 years of age. And of the 47 Air Force operators, nearly half (22) had six months or less experience on the bike they rode. In fact, six of the fatal accidents happened on borrowed bikes.

While the subject is still people, the bikes involved had something in common, too. Nearly eight out of 10 (39 of 49) were the larger, more powerful motorcycles with engines displacing more than 500cc.

It's impossible to talk about any kind of traffic accident without also talking about drinking and driving. In the case of these 49 fatal motorcycle accidents, almost half (24) of the operators had a 0.10 or higher BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) and were therefore too drunk to legally drive.

Worse yet, five had BACs over 0.20. These five operators were probably grossly intoxicated with all their physical and mental faculties impaired. They were likely suffering from loss of balance and double vision when they set out on their last ride.

Another subject that *has* to come up when talking about motorcycle accidents is helmets. Although helmets were available to all 47 Air Force operators, nearly one in three weren't wearing them when they had their accidents.

While the youth and inexperience that seem to lead to accidents can only be overcome with time, formal training seems to help. The Air Force requires bikers to attend a motorcycle challenge course (Air Force Regulation 50-24 Course VII) in order to register their machines on base, yet 19 of the 47 operators hadn't completed such training. And only four of the motorcyclists had attended a certified hands-on motorcycle skills training program.

Hands-on programs such as the Motorcycle Riders Course, Better Biking Program and Motorcycle Operators Skills Test (MOST II) have been started at 55 Air Force bases. And during the last two years over 12,000 motorcyclists have been trained.

Does hands-on training really help? Well, decide for yourself. In 1982, 29 percent (6,567) of all new Air Force motorcyclists (22,636) received hands-on training. Yet, only nine percent of the fatal accidents involved motorcyclists who had completed hands-on training.

More evidence for the hands-on training is apparent from the fact that 41 of the 49 fatal accidents were directly caused by motorcycle operator error. Nearly six of every 10 of these accidents (29 of the 49) occurred because of excessive speeds and nearly half (24) happened when the motorcyclists failed to make a curve. In fact 17 of the fatal accidents combined excessive speed and failure to negotiate a curve.

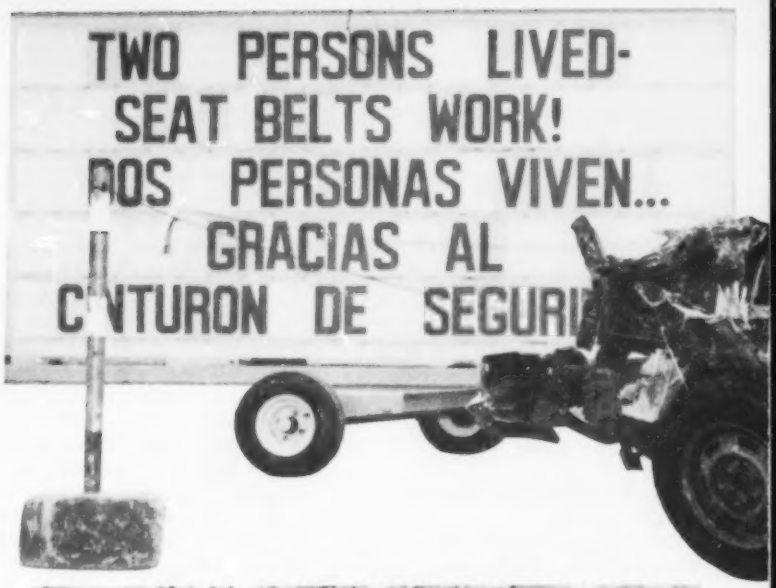
In 1983 more and more Air Force people will be riding motorcycles. And while only time will overcome the problems of youth and inexperience, hands-on training appears to be the best remedy if we don't want to repeat this year's cold, hard facts.

1982 U.S. Air Force Motorcycle Fatalities

TOTAL	NUMBER (Percent)	FACT
47	45 (95.74)	Had NOT attended a certified hands-on motorcycle skills training program
51*	43 (84.31)	Were under 25 years of age
49	41 (83.67)	Were directly caused by motorcycle operator error
49	39 (79.59)	Motorcycles were larger than 500cc displacement
49	29 (59.18)	Occurred as a result of excessive motorcycle speed
49	24 (48.98)	Occurred when motorcyclist failed to negotiate a curve
49	24 (48.98)	Of operators had a 0.10 or higher BAC
47	22 (46.81)	Of operators had six months or less experience on the accident motorcycle
47	19 (40.43)	Had not attended Course VII
47	14 (29.79)	Were not wearing helmets
49	6 (12.24)	Used borrowed motorcycles

* 44 operators and 7 riders

SO NEAR ...BUT SO FAR



The most common excuses for *not* wearing safety belts go something like this:

"I'm only going to work," or "I'm just going to the corner store."

These are among the poorest excuses offered because most accidents happen on these short trips. But don't take our word for it. Hear what some of the 296 people who sent us "Make It Click" forms said.

I was driving home from the base, headed toward the expressway, when an oncoming auto suddenly swerved directly into my traffic lane

I was driving to the skating rink . . . the car hit an icy spot and started to spin . . .

I departed the base in heavy afterduty traffic. About two blocks down the boulevard I had to stop because of a red traffic signal several hundred yards ahead. Another vehicle whose driver was inattentive struck my vehicle from the rear . . .

Traveling on the road from the base . . . fell asleep at wheel; went through red light and hit another car . . .

I was going down the street I live on when this car came from nowhere, ran through the red light and hit me . . .

While leaving the base I was trying to change lanes and didn't see the car ahead of me stopping . . .

While driving on my residential street I entered an intersection and was struck by a vehicle which had run a stop sign . . .

I was turning into the base when a pickup truck impacted at the passenger door . . .

I was turning into the base when a pickup truck impacted at the passenger door . . .

I was going toward the squadron area. I bent over to light a cigarette (because of the wind) and when I looked up there was a tree right there . . .

I was driving to work. I had just made a right-hand turn and as I was straightening the wheel my mug of hot tea spilled on my left leg. I leaned to the left and the car swerved to the right, hitting a telephone pole . . .

When returning to the base, the left front wheel came off . . .

My younger brother was going to my sister's house. About a mile and a half from home an airman ran a yield sign and hit my brother broadside . . .

My wife and a co-worker were going to lunch from their office. They had driven one block . . . when all of a sudden, a 17-year-old schoolboy on lunchbreak ran through a stop sign at an estimated 60 mph . . .

A friend asked me to take his kid to nursery school. When at this stop sign this lady didn't stop and ran right into the side the kid was on . . .

We were on our way home when we were run off the road by another car . . .

I had just picked up a pizza on my way home. A woman ran a stop sign, I tried to go around her but she made such a wide turn I was forced off the road . . .

I was leaving McDonald's and pulled out into the intersection. I was distracted by a sudden noise, looked back around, and I was sitting on a median in the middle of the traffic . . .

My wife was traveling to work, when she attempted to cross the intersection. Another car ran a stop light and hit her . . .

I was pulling out of a parking area through the right of way when a car going up the wrong way broadsided me . . .

We were going food shopping, as we approached an intersection a guy

Thanks to seat belts two dependent wives survived this accident when their car was struck by two trucks in succession near Torrejon AB, Spain.

in an old pickup truck ran the red light . . .

The sergeant was returning home . . . misjudged the distance to the hazard . . . elected not to brake and attempted to coast through the water . . . the car hydroplaned and slid out of control off the road, impacting a low embankment nose first . . . flipped into the air end-for-end . . .

I dropped my two brothers off at the school dance and was going to my girlfriend's house . . . when I started to feel the vehicle start to slide, so I started to try to steer it out, but taking the turn to close to the berm I caught the furrow in the berm . . .

Returning home from picking up his high school diploma, my son touched his brakes to slow down; the right brake grabbed, causing the car to vear to the right. The car glanced off one car and plowed into another . . .

My first stop was going to be to register my new used car. I noticed an accident ahead . . . traffic had started to slow . . . I also started to slow . . . I then noticed a van which was behind me move over to my extreme left on the shoulder . . . at the same time I heard a screech of brakes and was hit from the rear . . .

I was going toward Gate 2 when a car pulled out from a service station and crossed my lane. I didn't have time to stop or avoid her . . .

I was traveling in the base housing area when a car made an illegal turn on a blind corner and hit my car . . .

I was at the intersection behind the base cafeteria. I didn't see any traffic so I proceeded into the intersection. When I did I was hit on the right . . .

I was driving down a base street when I saw a friend of mine. I yelled to get his attention and felt my car hit the one in front of me . . .

I was driving home when a car stopped in front of me and I hit his rear end . . .

I was going to treat myself to breakfast at a restaurant before going to my last Saturday morning university class. Less than two miles from home I was hit in the right side as a car left a parking lot . . .

We were coming back from the park when we were broadsided by a car coming from our right . . .

I was on my way to work when my vehicle was run off the road and into a ravine . . .

My family and I were on our way home from the shopping center. My husband was driving. I looked up just as we hit a patch of ice and started going down the road sideways. I saw the ditch coming up fast. There was a thud, the sound of metal grinding and a slow piercing pain on the side of my head as the top began to buckle. The next thing I remember was hanging upside down . . .

Driving to work I rounded a rather sharp corner to find my right of way contested by a deer. I swerved to miss him and lost control of my car . . .

It was a normal drive home from the office. Recognizing the green light, I was just about to cross a major highway and proceeded into my apartment complex. When I was about halfway across the first lane, a car suddenly appeared in front of me. There was no time to brake or brace myself before I hit the other car . . .

I was going to the store when this car came real fast around the corner with no brakes and . . .

I was running some errands in town and was returning from some shopping to my home when my car was hit broadside by an old full-size relic piloted by a very elderly woman . . .

I was departing the base when a small white car, approaching from across the intersection, attempted to make a left-hand turn through my car. I swerved to the right to avoid the collision, but my attempt was futile. . . .

And these are only some of the reports where people actually told us they were "only going a short distance" to work or shopping or out for a burger or a pack of smokes. The big difference for the 495 people covered by the report is that they were "saved by the belt."

Line of Duty

Reprinted from *The Sunburst* Holloman AFB N.M.

This is an OPEN LETTER to the individual who rode the black Harley sportster past me recently going to Alamogordo:

I have gotten used to the sight of motorcyclists stopping outside the gate to take off their helmets and vests before driving downtown; however, I was very impressed to watch you take your helmet off at 55 mph and turn around to fasten it to the rear of your motorcycle seat. I was even more impressed to see you pull off your vest, turn around, roll up your vest and place it into your helmet, at 55 mph.

I realize that you feel it is your "right" to be able to ride without encumbrances and I would not deny you your opportunity to risk your life in the manner of your choice. When you have your accident, and it will occur eventually if you keep riding your cycle in this manner, some physician will do his very best to save your life and to limit your long term disability. It might even be me. AFTER the medical care is completed, however, that physician will have to make a line of duty recommendation regarding THAT MEDICAL CARE. If I am that physician, you should expect a recommendation of NOT IN LINE OF DUTY.

You may be able to convince the line of duty investigator that this finding is in error, but to do so you will have to convince him/her and the reviewing officials that what you were doing did not constitute misconduct. I doubt that you can do that.

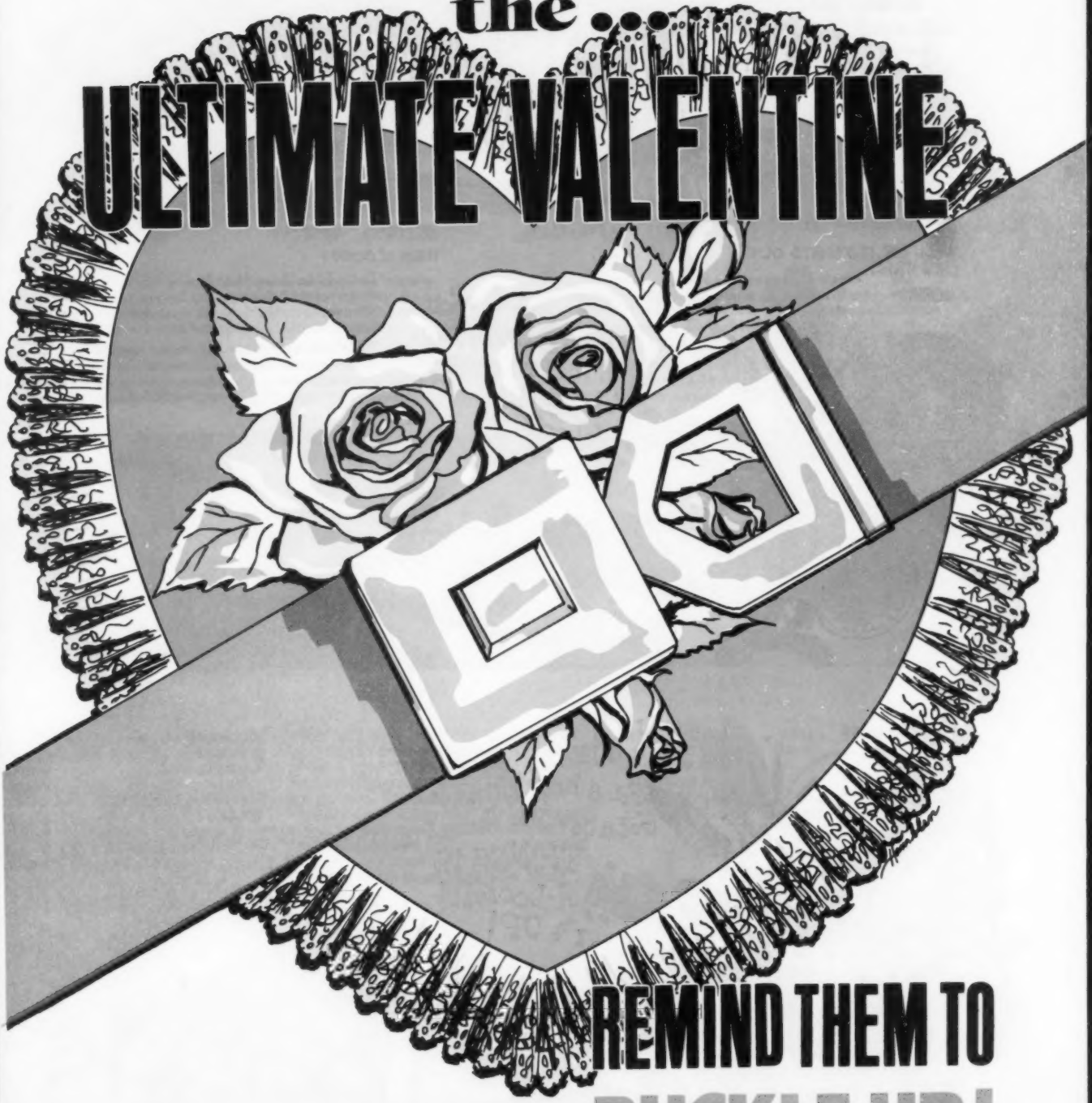
I will not interfere with your "right" to choose your own manner of self-destruction, but I will not allow the U.S. taxpayer to subsidize your misconduct. A finding of "Not Line of Duty" will mean that YOU will be paying the Air Force for the medical care furnished to you (at about $400 per day). Time spent in the hospital will be "bad time" for purposes of retirement or reenlistment obligation and, if you are disabled, neither the Air Force nor the VA will compensate you for your injuries or disabilities.

So go ahead, do "your own thing," but do so with the knowledge that when the accident occurs you're on your own financially.

MAJ. (DR.) GARY L. HENRIKSEN
Chief, Aeromedical Services
USAF Hospital Holloman

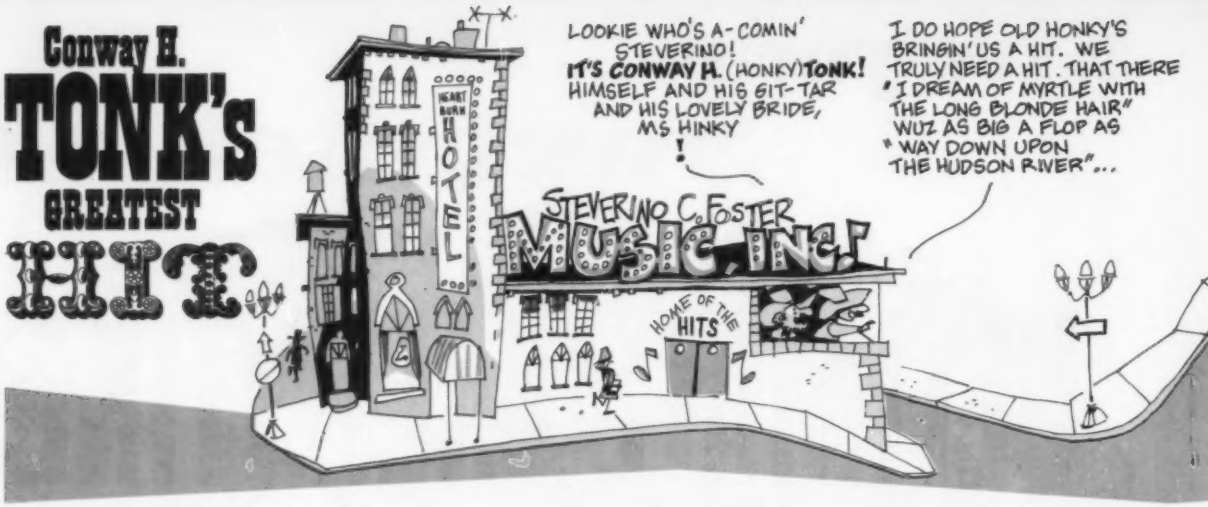
Give your Sweethearts the...

ULTIMATE VALENTINE



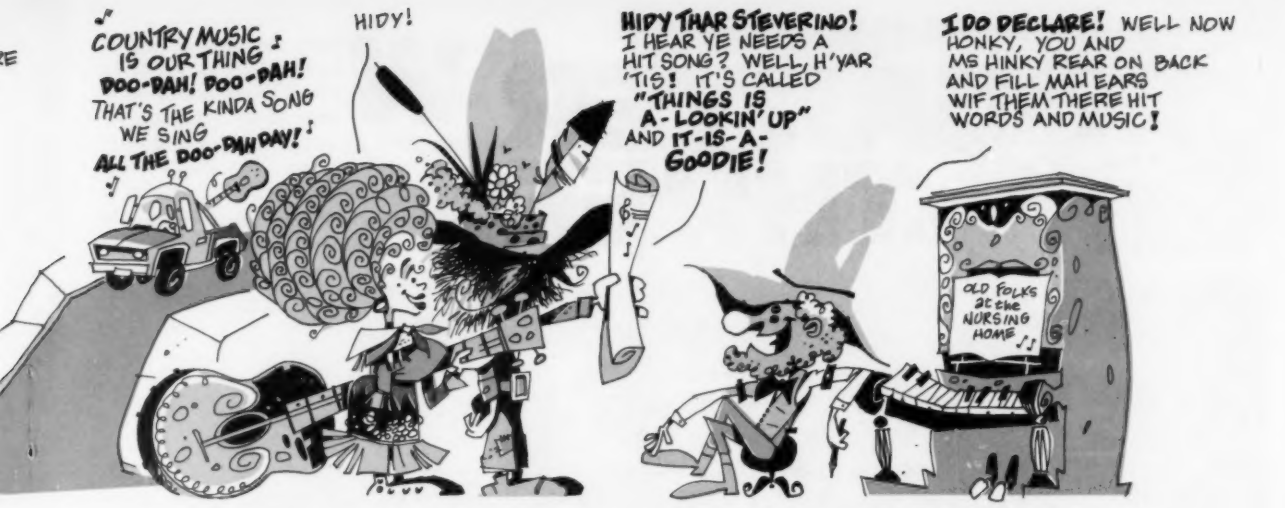
REMIND THEM TO BUCKLE UP!

Conway H. TONK'S GREATEST HIT


LOOKIE WHO'S A-COMIN' STEVERINO! IT'S CONWAY H. (HONKY) TONK! HIMSELF AND HIS GIT-TAR AND HIS LOVELY BRIDE, MS HINKY !
I DO HOPE OLD HONKY'S BRINGIN' US A HIT. WE TRULY NEED A HIT. THAT THERE "I DREAM OF MYRTLE WITH THE LONG BLONDE HAIR" WUZ AS BIG A FLOP AS "WAY DOWN UPON THE HUDSON RIVER"...
HEART BURN HOTEL
STEVERINO C. FOSTER MUSIC, INC.!
HOME OF THE HITS

WELL SIR, IT STARTS OUT LIKE THIS:
♪ Boll Weevil got mah cotton
Dog Pound jailed mah pup ♪
Mama's in the penitentiary
THINGS IS A-LOOKIN' UP! ♪
THEN IT GOES:
I wuz drivin' down thet long windin' freeway
On my way to Fulsom prison to see maw
Who wuz workin' in the license plate department
Fer a-feedin' arsenic cobbler to mah paw
I took along my flea-bit hound named "Bugle"
Who's mean and dumb and croaks jist like a frog
I'm dang near ruined from all them dog-bite law soot
But I figger ever' boy should have a dawg
RIBBIT!
RIBBIT
RIBBIT!

THEN I FINISHES UP WIF:
♪ Got a jailbird fer a mama ♪
Got a beerhound fer a pup
Got a cow wif hoof and mouth disease
THINGS IS A-LOOKIN' UP! ♪
SMACK
YOU MEAN YER DONE? ...THAT'S ALL THEY IS?
WHY, SHORE...
YOU MEAN OUT ON T DRUNK DR RACE A CH RAILROAD 1660RANT OUTTA HIS T'WEAR'A A-GONNA
HEART BURN HOTEL
STEVERINO C. FOSTER MUSIC, INC.!
HOME OF THE HITS


COUNTRY MUSIC IS OUR THING
DOO-DAH! DOO-DAH!
THAT'S THE KINDA SONG WE SING
ALL THE DOO-DAH DAY!
HIDY!
HIDY THAR STEVERINO! I HEAR YE NEEDS A HIT SONG? WELL, H'YAR 'TIS! IT'S CALLED "THINGS IS A-LOOKIN' UP" AND IT-IS-A-GOODIE!
I DO DECLARE! WELL NOW HONKY, YOU AND MS HINKY REAR ON BACK AND FILL MAH EARS WIF THEM THERE HIT WORDS AND MUSIC!
OLD FOLKS at the NURSING HOME

Folks wuz zippin' down that freeway doin' ninety
Whilst I, skeered stiff, kept tryin' t' fifty-five
Twixt the speeders, the tailgaters, and the truckers
You go ninety, friend, or you don't stay alive

Old Bugle wuz a-shakin' and a-croakin'
(I think I said he barks jist like a frog)
I suppose us human beans kin take them freeways
But they really shouldn't happen to a dawg

Well, anyhow, I done found me an off-ramp
At the end of which old Bugle croaks a cheer
That hound had done sniffed-out the nearest tavern
Old Bugle dearly loves a dish of beer

So we parked the truck and sashayed in the beer joint
The name of which, as I recall, wuz "SKUNKS"
There wuz joke box songs and folks wuz shuffleboardin'
But SKUNKS wuz mainly gittin' drivers drunk

MEAN NOBODY'S A-GONNA GET KILT
ON THAT FREEWAY BY ONE OF THEM
NK DRIVERS? AIN'T NOBODY A-GONNA
E A CHOO-CHOO TRAIN TO THE
ROAD CROSSIN'... AND LOSE? AIN'T NO
RANT DANG FOOL A-GONNA SIT FLANG
TA HIS CAR 'CAUSE HE'S TOO STOOPID
EAR A SEAT BELT? AIN'T NOBODY
ONNA SPEED THROUGH A SCHOOL ZONE?

WHUT THET SONG NEEDS IS SOMETHIN' ABOUT A NUT ON A MOTORSIKKLE WHO WON'T WEAR A HELMET OR LEATHERS AND WHO BOUNCES DOWN THE ROAD FER A BLOCK OR SO ON HIS HEADBONE, THEREBY TRANSFORMIN' HIS DARLIN' CHILE ANN INTO A LITTLE ONE-HALF ORPHAN ANNIE! WHUT'S HAPPENED, HONKY, IS THET YOU AND MS HINKY HAS DONE WRIT A HAPPY SONG! A HIT SONG MUST NEEDS BE SAD!

WELL, I S'POSE I KIN DO IT OVER. BUT I DO HAVE A QUESTION... I TRULY DO...

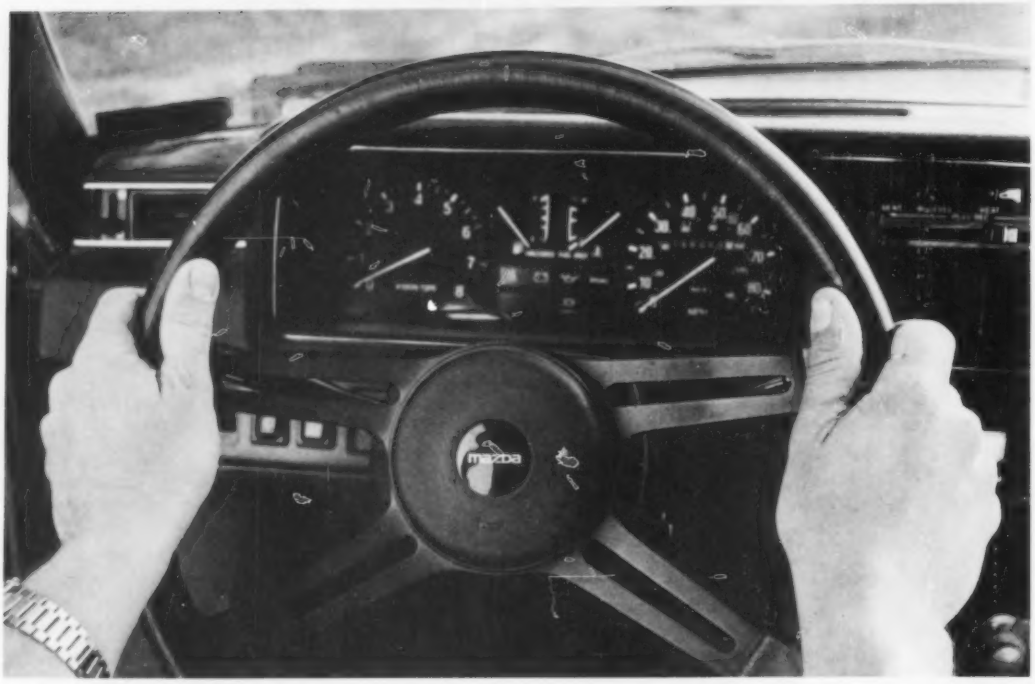
WELL, AX IT

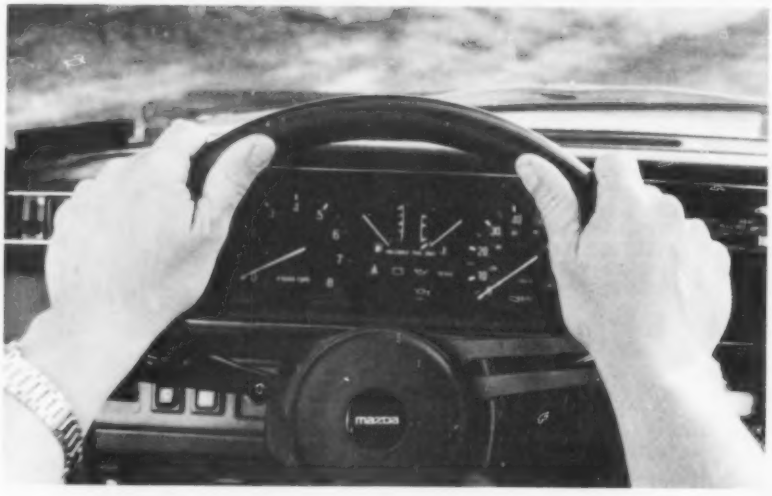
WHUT'S A SEAT BELT?

HIS GREATEST HIT YOU ASK? ... IT'S THAT 18-WHEELER A-COMIN' DOWN THE OFF-RAMP WHICH CONWAY H. TONK AND MS HINKY IS A-GOIN' UP!

It's a QUARTER to THREE

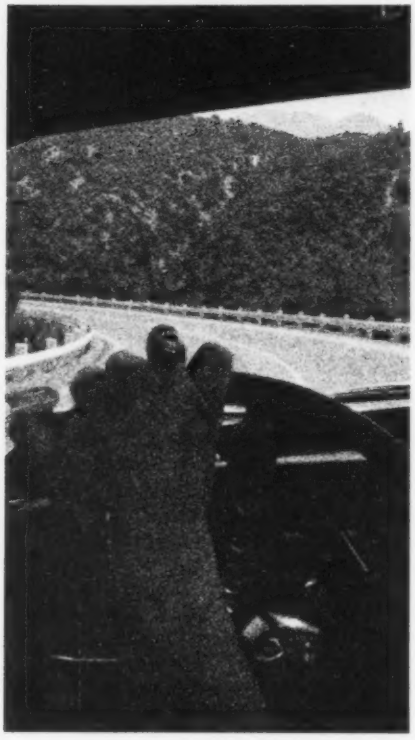
Where do you put your hands on the steering wheel? Your parents and your driver's training instructors probably taught you to use the "ten" and "two" positions. Most professional racecar drivers prefer to hold the wheel at the "nine" and "three" spots. They feel this allows

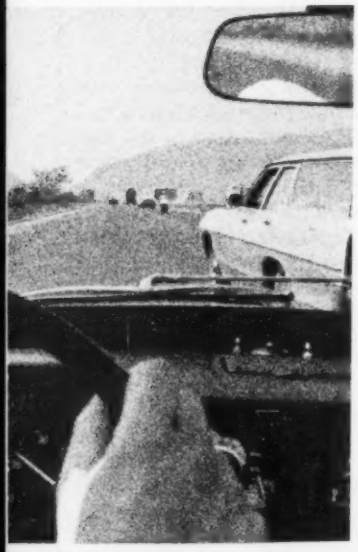




them more control over the car. Some driver's training courses recommend nine and three for emergency maneuvers.

Whichever you like is okay because both allow ease in turning. Most important, both positions use two hands on the wheel. Much better than one hand at twelve or six.





Between a ROCK and a HARD Place

Faced with two unappealing alternatives, people use terms like "between a rock and a hard place," and "between the devil and the deep blue sea." Drivers who speed on curves understand these phrases very well — if they survive.

On a right-hand curve, the driver who speeds can slide to the left and set up a head-on collision with an oncoming car. Although not so common as other types of accidents, head-on collisions are the most dangerous kind. The closing speed (speed of one car plus that of the other) makes the force of impact much greater.

On a left-hand curve, a speeding car hurtles off the road surface to the right to lie in the weeds or smash into the rocks. If there's a drop-off, the car takes its first and last flying lesson.

The speed limit signs posted on curves give reasonable speeds at which to negotiate those curves; keep your speed below those limits. Be on the alert for speeding drivers on their way to a hard place.

NHTSA OPENS INVESTIGATION OF SUZUKI MOTORCYCLES

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has opened a safety defect investigation involving alleged problems with the side stands on an estimated 600,000 motorcycles marketed by U.S. Suzuki Motor Corp. The side stand is used to prop up the motorcycle when it is parked.

The agency said the investigation is the result of reports of nine accidents, including eight injuries and three fatalities involving both operators and passengers. The operators allegedly lost control of their vehicles due to the side stand being in the down position while the motorcycle was in operation.

This could occur because the operator forgot to raise the stand to the retracted position or because the stand did not completely retract when raised.

Normally, motorcycles are steered by "leaning" into a turn, but a side stand in the down position can interfere with this maneuver. NHTSA said the failure of a side stand to retract while the vehicle is moving forward is contrary to general industry practice and may not meet the requirements of the federal standard on motorcycle controls and displays.

The agency said the investigation involved the entire fleet of Suzuki motorcycles sold for operation on the highway, starting with the 1975 model year, and includes a variety of side stand designs.

Anyone who has experienced this problem on Suzuki motorcycles or any other motorcycle is urged to report it by writing to NHTSA, Office of Defects Investigation, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590, or by calling the agency's toll-free Auto Safety Hotline at 800-424-9393 (426-0123 in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.)

ALCOHOL AND FATAL ACCIDENTS

For a number of years, safety people have believed that alcohol is involved in 50% of all fatal accidents. New data from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis indicates the figure is considerably higher. Latest figures show alcohol is probably involved in 55% of fatal accidents, 18-25% of injury accidents, and 5-8% of property damage accidents.

A breakdown of the Center's data indicated about 60% of persons who died operating passenger cars, light trucks, vans, and motorcycles had alcohol in their systems at the time of death. Alcohol was found in 49% of fatally-injured pedestrians; 40% were legally intoxicated.

TIRE TREADS

In the January *Road & Track*, Tony Hogg spends some space wondering about the considerable number of pieces of tire tread lying around the roads. He had recently seen a motorcyclist nearly thrown from his bike while trying to avoid an enormous strip of tire tread lying in the middle of the highway.

Hogg called Don Carr to ask some questions about all those tire treads. Carr owns 4day Tire Stores, handles a number of different tire brands, and could be depended on for the straight skinny.

Carr told Hogg that unless you are following on a motorcycle, there is no particular danger because when a truck tire throws its tread, the tread usually hits the underside of the truck and drops to the ground. But he did have a tip. Carr says that he never stops beside a truck because some trucks use tubed tires secured with lock rings and if the lock rings should blow, which can happen, the result is absolutely devasting. DRIVER thought you might want to know that.

GSA TO USE AIR BAGS

A demonstration of air bags as optional safety equipment on passenger vehicles will be undertaken by the General Services Administration. The program will be carried out in cooperation with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which will fund the program. GSA, which does most of the purchasing of automobiles for the federal government, operates a fleet of 85,000 vehicles.

As a second safety measure, the agency will begin immediately to equip passenger vehicles in its fleet with a high-visibility third brake light mounted on the hatch back, rear deck lid or interior rear shelf. Researchers for NHTSA have tested the low-cost item, which has proven effective in reducing rear-end collisions. Vehicles in Washington, DC and Chicago will be equipped first, with GSA vehicles in other cities to be included later.

PARK-INTO-REVERSE PROBLEMS

The Supreme Court of Virginia has upheld a $16,500 verdict in the first park-into-reverse suit filed against the Ford Motor Co. A Falls Church woman sued the company more than six years ago after a 1976 accident in which her 1973 Lincoln Continental allegedly slipped into reverse. The car ran over her leg and collided with parked cars.

The Center for Auto Safety says there are more than 1,000 park-into-reverse suits, asking in excess of $1.6 billion in damages. The Center also says the defect has been responsible for more than 160 deaths.

in Praise of Cheap HELMETS

People used to say, "If you've got a $10 head, buy a $10 helmet." But then, as motorcycle accident investigations became more thorough, it was found that even cheap helmets were saving rider's lives.

This little story is about SSgt. Mark Joecks, whose $49.95 helmet wasn't a real cheapie but certainly wasn't top-drawer either. And the interesting thing about the $49.95 helmet is that it was seldom worn. Sergeant Joecks preferred to ride his Honda 350 wearing safety goggles for eye protection. He liked the wind whipping through his hair and stinging his face. He's not sure why he decided to wear his helmet on the ride from his home to Tinker AFB one night. It was about 10:30 p.m. when he set out on the short trip. What happened that night is best told in his own words.

"I was heading east near an interstate overpass when I overtook a slow-moving vehicle in the right lane. As I came to his left rear, about to pass, he turned into me. His unexpected lane change forced me into the left turn lane. I began moving over when I saw him closing in on me, but apparently I wasn't fast enough. I know he didn't see me — then.

"I didn't have many options. I could hit him, hit the center cement pilings supporting the overpass, or try to hit the grass median. It doesn't take long to remember that grass is softer than metal or concrete. In self-defense, I threw the bike back at the car to give me the leeway I needed to get by the upcoming sign posts.

"Anyway, the front wheel on the bike hit the curb and the tube blew out. The bike flipped. My face, or rather the visor on my helmet, hit first. A witness said I landed face first. I don't remember. I was out momentarily.

"I couldn't believe that driver just kept going. He saw me hit. He had to — I practically did a summersault right in front of him. He made a left turn from the right lane and turned on the interstate. That driver didn't even see if I was dead or alive."

Sergeant Joecks is alive all right, thanks to his $49.95 helmet and whatever stroke of luck made him put it on that night. He has some cuts and abrasions to both knees and elbows and his right forearm is injured. But the only mark on his face is a razor-like cut which he thinks he got when the visor hit the ground.

"If I had been wearing my goggles, my face and head would have been ground into the dirt. It is not an experience I care to repeat." He admits he wasn't too anxious to buy a helmet in the first place but now he says "My $49.95 investment is what I think saved my life!"

(Thanks to SSgt. Dee Veal, 552nd Airborne Warning and Control Wing, Tinker AFB, Okla. for providing the details of SSgt. Joecks' accident.)

(USAF photo by MIKE McCURRY)

tteecc!h! double tech with tsgt ron lathrop

COMMENT: I have been having this starting problem since I shipped my 1980 car to the Philippines. I drive the car 10 or more miles, stop and turn off the ignition. Five minutes later when I try starting nothing happens — not even a click. If I let the engine cool down for 20 to 30 minutes it will start. The waiting time is longer on a hot day. The battery and alternator are functioning well. The repair shops here have suggested: replacing the starter; replacing the battery cables; replacing the battery; salt is corroding a connection, and other things which I think are stupid. Can you diagnose this problem?

REPLY: I'll go with the corroded connections — probably between the starter and battery. But also check between the starter switch and ignition terminal on the starter relay. My next bet would be a faulty ignition switch. And finally, the solenoid return spring may be too long and should be replaced with a shorter part.

COMMENT: In the August '82 Double Tech comments, I read the man's problem with lights dimming while in idle or slowing down and stopping. I recently had a similar problem and was told it was many things and found the real culprit by accident. It was the grounding strap that goes over the motor mount to ground the engine and frame together. It was rusted and corroded, causing a high resistance connection that would cause a high voltage drop when the alternator slowed down.

An easy check of this is to take a jumper lead from a clean ground connection on the engine to a place on the metal of the body where you can get a good clean ground. If the lights no longer dim you can make a good temporary fix by leaving this connection until you get the car on a hoist to replace or clean the original ground strap.

REPLY: Always check the basics and in electrical systems that includes the ground. However, I reserve temporary fixes for emergencies only. Do the job right and don't depend on a temporary fix to keep you going until you can get around to doing the job correctly.

COMMENT: Some time back you published a good article which explained the difference between turbocharging and supercharging and the devices used to accomplish same. Cound you please zap me a copy of that article? I'm considering getting one of these types but would like to be educated before making a choice.

REPLY: If you want to look it up at your library it's in the February 1979 DRIVER. However, I would like to throw in my two cents worth to further your education.

Basically the difference between the turbocharger and supercharger is that the supercharger is run off of engine power via belts or chains while the turbocharger runs from engine exhaust pressure. While the supercharger requires engine horsepower to produce more horsepower, the turbocharger produces free horsepower because it doesn't have to rob the engine to begin with. At low speeds the supercharger is still using up horsepower and giving little in return, while the turbocharger is coasting.

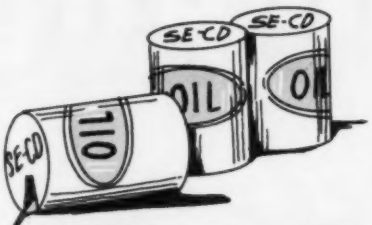
Now, my two cents worth. Even the best engineered, from-the-factory units are touchy at best and can easily produce more damage than good. There are only a few of the world's largest manufacturers that I would trust to produce a super or turbocharged vehicle. And most of those have been having more than their fair share of trouble with their units. Personally, I would NEVER buy an aftermarket turbo or supercharger.

COMMENT: I've religiously followed the radial tire rotation charts you've published over the 60,000 miles I've got on my front-wheel-drive sedan — rotating every 4,000 miles. At 60K miles I have 60 percent tread left, but I notice there is less tread remaining on the left side tires which each have 60K miles on than on the three right side tires which each have 40K miles. Question: Can I take one of my right side wheels, remove the tire, reverse its direction (put the white sidewall in) and begin rotating it on the left side to even up the wear better?

REPLY: OK, you apparently already understand that radials take a set from the direction that they turn, so to put a right side tire on the left it has to be mounted backwards — so to speak. The problem is, I don't like the idea of remounting a tire for *any* reason other than needed repairs. This is why I recommend snow tires be mounted on their own rims, not exchanged each season with the regular tires. There is just too much that can go wrong in mounting tires, including cut beads that can lead to sudden tire failures.

Most people no longer have to make these kinds of decisions, because the manufacturers are equipping cars with space-saver, emergency-only spares that can't be used in the five-tire rotation pattern. Actually the four-tire rotation pattern is better because it follows a basic rule of tire placement: Tires on the same axle should be equally worn.

Again, folks, some manufacturers (vehicle and tire) are recommending against rotating tires on front-wheel-drive cars except when alignment problems are encountered. They reason that the rear tires will last the life of the car.



COMMENT: I'm using a 30-weight motor oil lettered "SE-CD" on the can in my 1978 diesel-engine car. That is the type of oil that the owner's manual says to use. The only problem I've had is finding it. I have to buy it by the case and carry it with me on trips. The manuals for newer diesel cars say to use "SE and CC" lubricant. What do the letters mean, and can I use the "SE-CC" oil in my car?

REPLY: Stick with the "SE-CD" oil to make sure you don't invalidate whatever guarantee you may still have on your engine.

The "S" rating on top of oil cans is important to owners of gasoline-powered cars. The S refers to gasoline-engine use (it stands for "service"). The E is the oil's rating on an A, B, C, D, E, F scale, with F being the highest rating.

The "C" rating applies to diesel engines. The C stands for "commercial." The second letter ranks the quality from A to D, with D being the oil to be used under the most severe conditions or in engines with the greatest lubrication requirements.

If an oil is rated SF or CD, the highest of the two ratings, it can be used in any vehicle having lesser requirements. But an SD oil cannot be used in a gasoline engine requiring an SE lubricant, and a CC oil can't be used in a diesel engine that calls for a CD lubricant.

The bottom line: follow the manufacturer's specifications.

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you have a general interest automotive question that you would like answered, send it to:

DOUBLE TECH
DRIVER MAGAZINE
HQ AFISC/SEDD
NORTON AFB, CA 92409

HOW IT HAPPENS!

A married couple, both NCO's, are driving across the country, returning from leave. They are traveling in their van, pulling a rental trailer which contains some of their belongings. The wife is driving, without her seatbelt, and the husband is relaxing in the passenger seat, with his belt fastened.

Two miles outside of a small town, the wife falls asleep at the wheel. When the vehicle runs off the road, she immediately awakens. As she is trying to recover control of the van, the trailer overturns, causing the van to overturn as well.

In the accident, the wife is thrown from the van and pinned underneath. She dies of her injuries. The husband comes away from the accident without injury.

The seatbelt made the difference.

GROUND HOG

MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE

"Percy! Wake up, Percy!"

"Huh? Yup, yup, yup."

"Percy, stick your head outside and see if the sun is shining."

"Yup, yup, yup. 'Percy do this; Percy do that.' Yup, yup, yup. Percy's got to do everything 'round here. If Percy don't do it, it don't get done."

"Well?"

"It's too bright to look up, but I did see my shadow. Yup, yup, yup. Percy saw it. He did, he did, he did. Yup, yup, yup."

"Arrgh!!! Six more weeks of winter! I so wanted to go motorcycling this weekend."

For most of us, February is hardly a motorcycling month. But it's a good time to take care of all our machine's maintenance. By doing so now we'll be ready when that first nice weekend comes along this spring. And we'll also have a safer bike to ride during the entire season.

Preparing your bike for its winter nap was the subject of the "Motorcycle Hibernation" Backyard Mechanic in the October 1980 DRIVER. Now we're going to tell you how to breathe life back into the machine *before* that first spring ride.

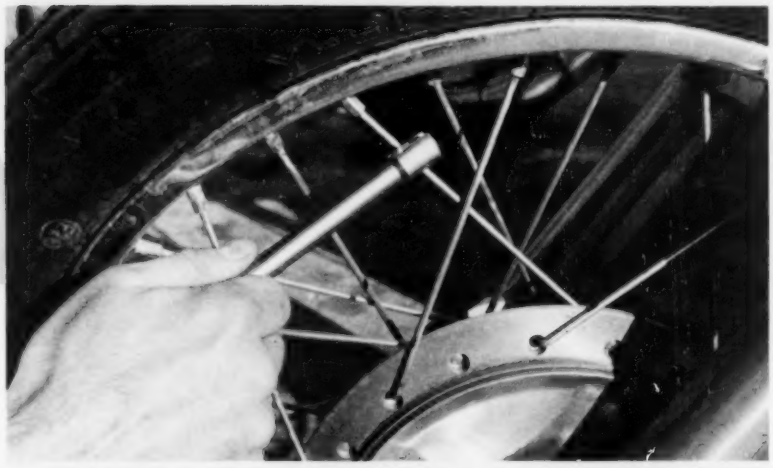
This life-breath requires more than a new air cleaner and fresh gasoline. You'll want to do a complete check-up. This includes checking the tires, spokes, rims, brakes, handlebar, cables, levers, mirrors, shock absorbers, steering stem, frame, fenders, wiring, every nut and bolt, shifter, clutch, transmission, chain and engine.

You'll want to do a complete tune-up and, if necessary, overhaul, before the season begins.

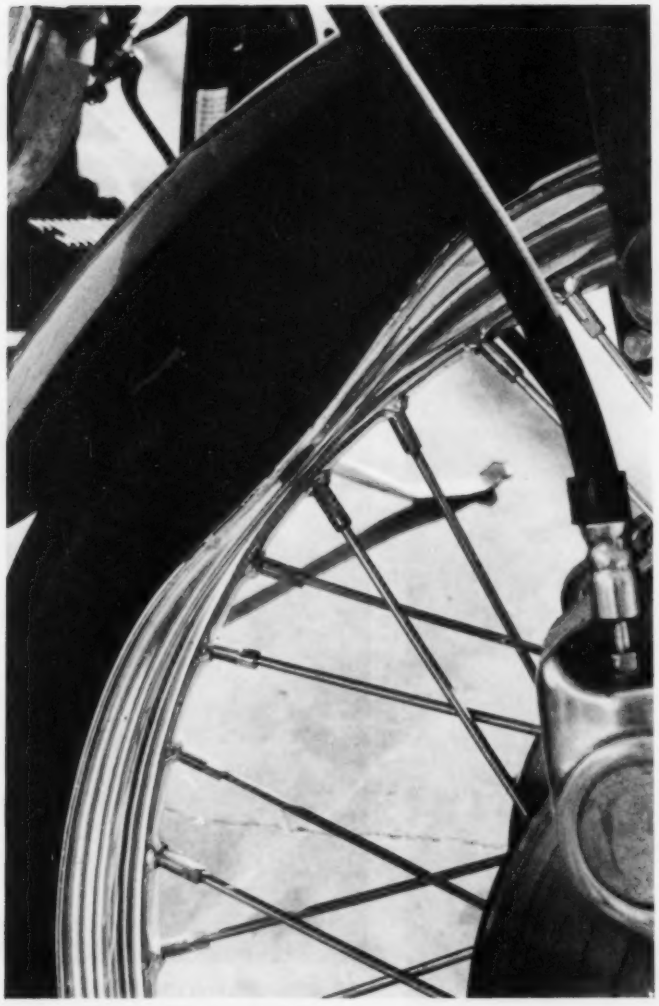
The details on how to do all of this are in the Backyard Mechanics, July and August 1982 DRIVER. A special chain maintenance article was printed in the February 1981 DRIVER.

Also, before that first spring ride you'll want to check the operator's equipment, including: helmet, eye protection, footwear, gloves and clothing. Helmets were specifically covered in the December 1981 DRIVER, while there was an article on all personal gear in the May 1980 issue. (If you've missed any of these articles, check your local library or write us for copies.)

Tires: Check for cracks, cuts, bruises and uneven wear. Check the inflation before riding.



(right)
Spokes: Check their tightness. Replace bent or stripped ones. On cast wheels, check for cracks. With fabricated units, check for loose, broken or bent rivets.



Rims: Check for bends or dents.

Brakes: Check shoes or pads for wear, glazing and grease or oil on surfaces. Also check drums and/or disks for deep scratches. Adjust.

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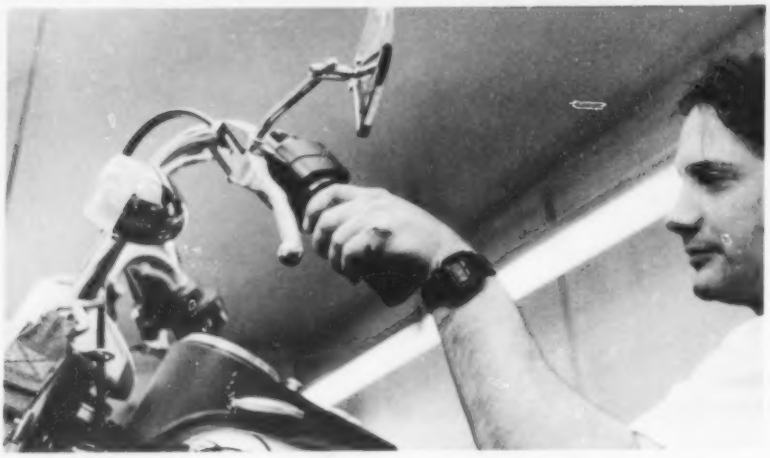
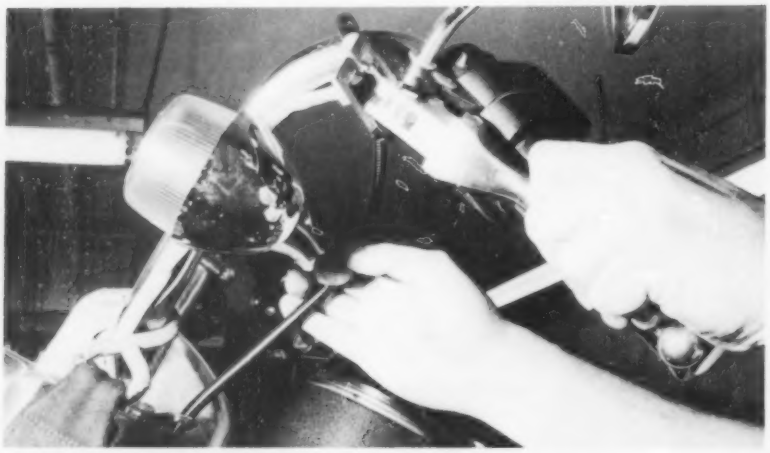
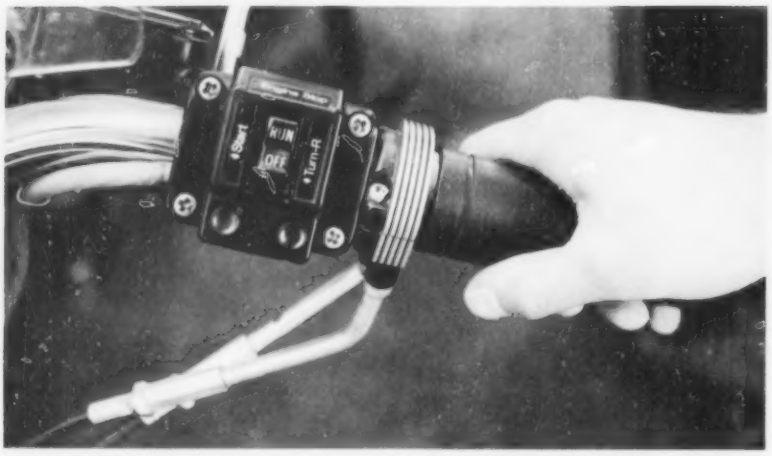


Handlebar: Check for bends, cracks and tightness. Make sure all the switches function.

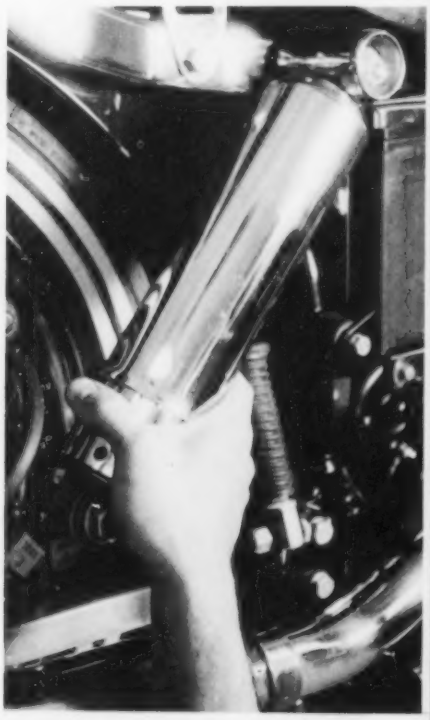


Cables & Levers: Check for chafing and smooth operation. Lubricate.



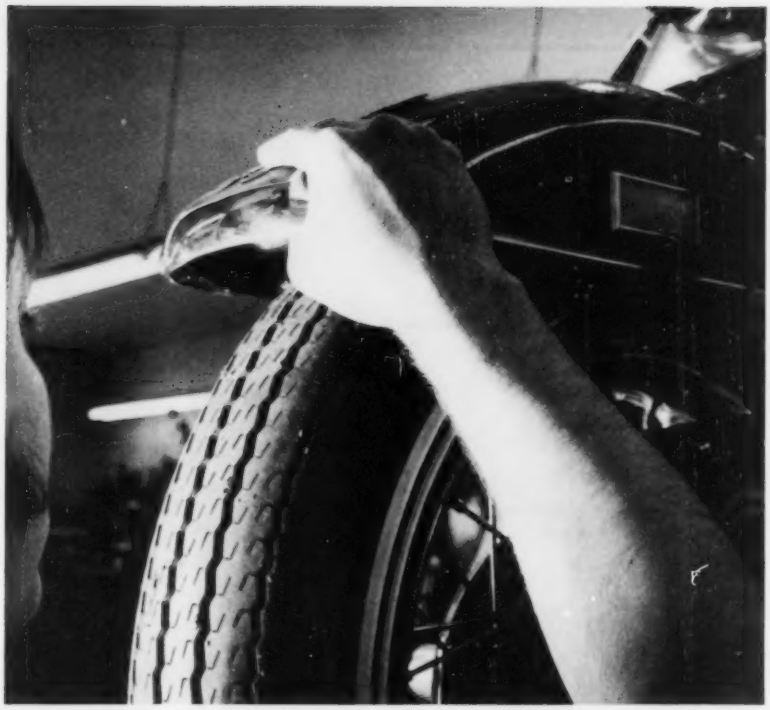
Throttle: Check grip for free operation and sticking. Check adjustment.

Mirrors: Check and tighten.



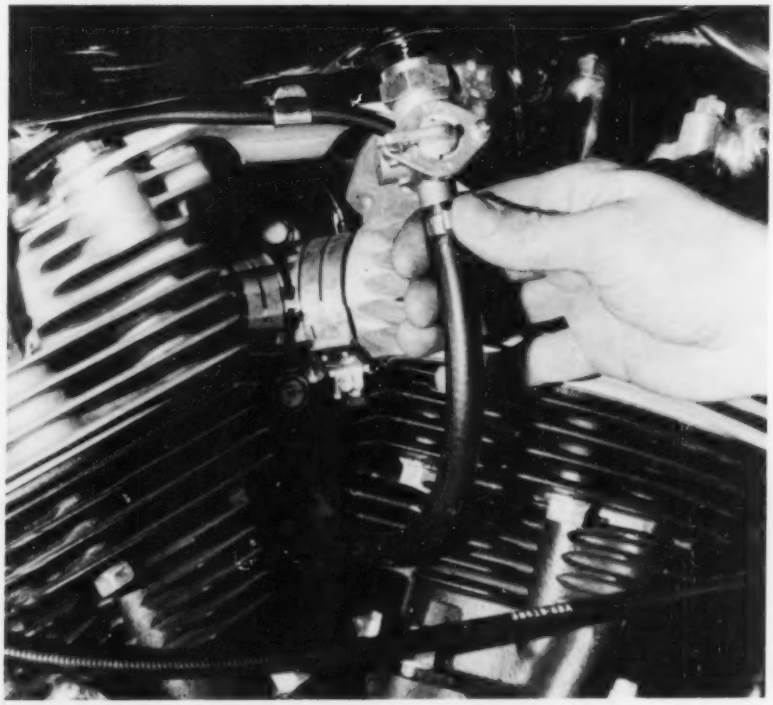
Shock Absorbers: Check damping force and look for bends, broken mounts and oil leaks.

Steering: Check stem for too much free play or excessive tightness. Check the seals, shaft and bearings.



Frame & Fenders: Check for bends, breaks and dents. Also look for signs of stress at joints.

Nuts & Bolts: Make sure they are all tightened.



Tank: Check for leaks and make sure that the tank and lines are securely fastened. Check the fuel filter too.

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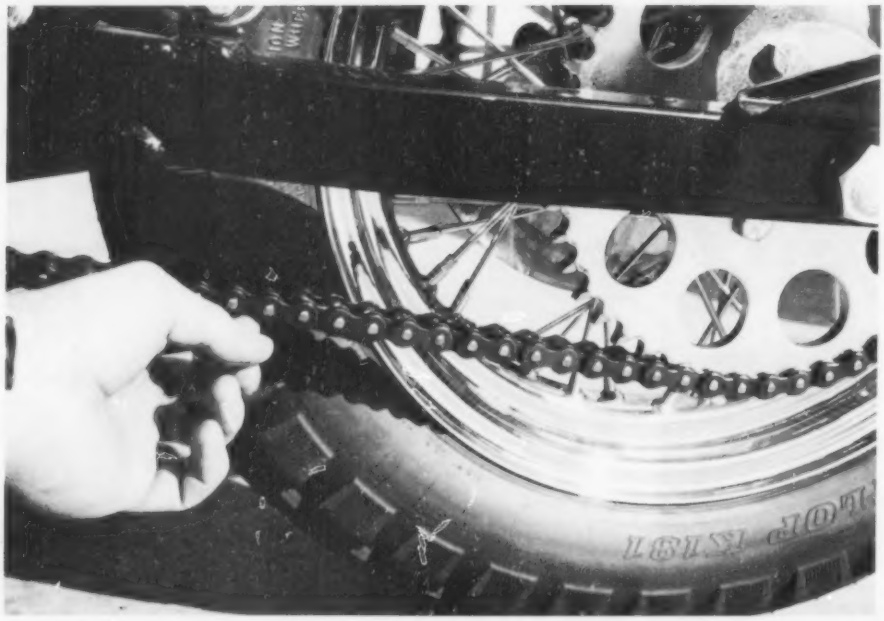
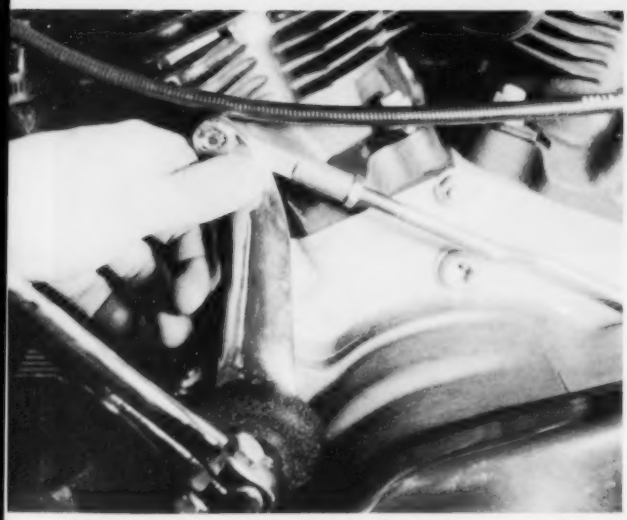
Lights: Make sure they all work and that the headlight is properly aimed.

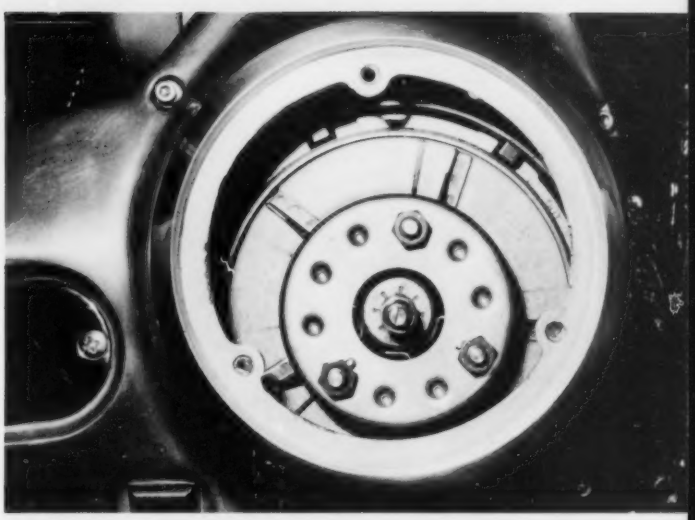
Wiring: Check the entire system for loose ends, disconnections and worn insulation.



Chain: Check condition and play. Clean, lubricate and adjust.

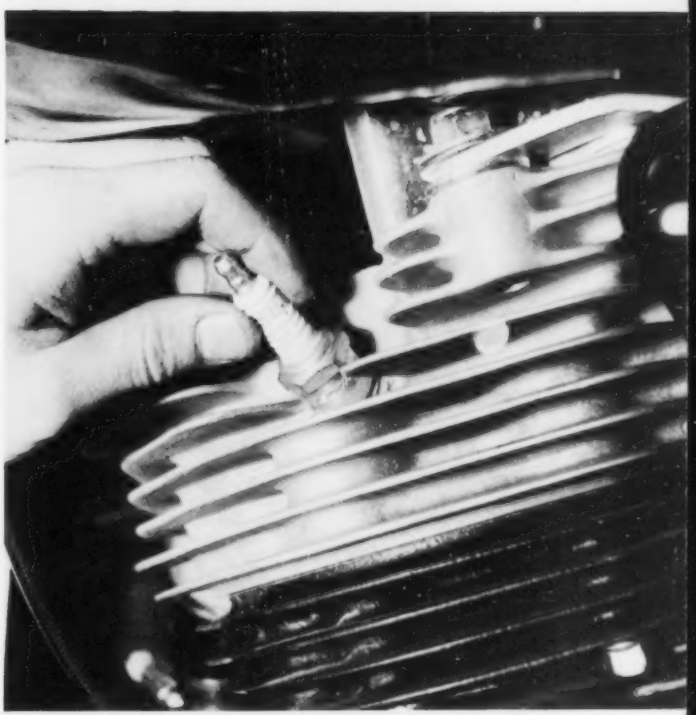


Shifter: Check tightness and lubricate.



Clutch: Check operation and adjust.

Transmission: Check oil level and condition. Water in oil will appear as white foam.



Spark Plug(s): Check condition and gap.

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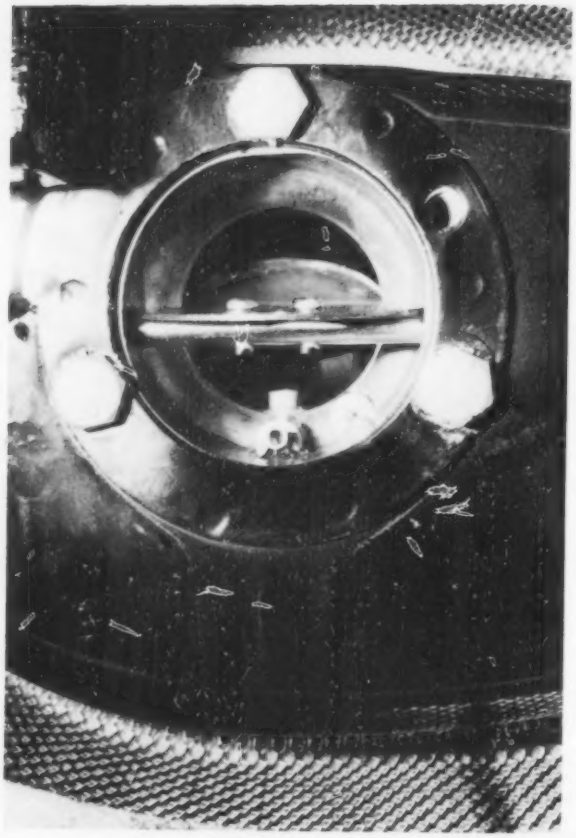
Compression: Check.

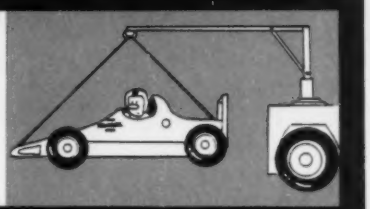


Engine: Check oil level and condition. Check timing and valves and adjust.

(left)
Carburetor: Check condition and adjust. Don't forget the air filter.

Special thanks to Terry Jaynes of Dale's Modern Cycle, San Bernardino, Calif., for his assistance in the preparation of this article.

BACKFIRE
LETTERS to the EDITOR



RTORAS!

I wish to comment on the Timely Topics section of your November 1982 issue. You quote a federal study that blames the adoption of Right-Turn-On-Red laws for a large increase in pedestrian and bicyclist crashes. It is correct that since RTOR laws have been adopted accidents have increased; however, the laws are not at fault.

Here in Pennsylvania the law allows for RTOR *"AFTER STOP."* I believe the general public either does not understand the law or chooses to ignore the *"STOP"* part. If you stop you can have time to look at all traffic in your vicinity before you turn.

RTORAS is a good law if we, the driving public, choose to obey all the law. Unfortunately, as with seatbelt laws, we choose to go our own way and everyone loses.

Ronald W. Hoover
HIA, Middletown, PA 17057

Well said! If drivers would take care not to interfere with other vehicles and pedestrians moving through the intersection on green lights and arrows, the right-turn-on-red would be fine.

A PLUG FOR SAFETY

I've been riding motorcycles on and off road for nearly fifteen years and am alarmed at the high fatality rate among those involved in motorcycle accidents. Statistically I should be dead but since I'm not, I would like to make a plug for motorcycle safety courses.

Excluding the self-induced fatalities attributable to operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs, most accidents are the result of inattention or complacency. One of the largest contributing factors is cyclists exceeding their own capabilities or those of their machines. It is well known that motorcycles are harder to see than automobiles and generally are not anticipated by the average motorist. It's no wonder that it seems as if the cars are all out to get the bikers.

The lowest common denominator is frequently inexperience. A large percentage of motorcycle accidents are not the fault of the cyclist. Also, most accidents can be prevented by knowing what to look for (or look out for, as the case may be). Many statistical studies reflect the fact that a large percentage of accident victims have been riding motorcycles for less than a year, and that an overwhelming majority have had no formal instruction on how to ride safely.

In response to increasing accident and fatality rates involving motorcyclists most military installations require the completion of a motorcycle safety course prior to the issuance of a base driving/parking decal to the cyclist. These courses usually consist of some classroom instruction as well as agility and skill tests. Any course of this nature can come as a welcome refresher to the experienced rider, and is invaluable to the novice biker. Statistics show a drastic reduction in the accident rate among individuals who have completed a safety course. Staying alive while operating a motorcycle is an art. Completion of a motorcycle safety course can help the inexperienced cyclist stay alive.

Lt. Mike Lewis, USN
FPO New York 09501

M.A.D.D.

I read with interest the November 1982 edition of DRIVER Magazine. I am an active member of M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers) and was especially interested in the article "Spirits of the Season." This was very well written and says everything that we are working to achieve.

Jean Saunders
Alexandria, VA 22308

TOW STRAPS

The November 1982 issue of DRIVER contained an article entitled "The Ultimate Backyard Mechanic." I noticed two pictures that showed a potential safety hazard in that article. Each showed a race vehicle being towed to the fuel pits using a tow strap. That's all right except that the strap is attached to the vehicle's roll bar above and behind the driver's head. If the strap happens to break loose from the tow vehicle or snaps in two, the person driving the car could be subject to serious injury from the flying strap.

As DRIVER is a safety-oriented magazine, I believe these two pictures should not have been printed.

Perhaps race car designers should consider placing a tow hook down near the front of the vehicle.

SSgt. Joseph W. Nerderman
Andrews AFB, MD 20335

The use of the tow strap and its attaching points to both the tow vehicle and race car are governed by Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART) safety rules. All towing of Indy-type race cars is done with the strap or a rope attached to the roll bar because it is the strongest attaching point available on the race car and it allows whoever is riding in the racer to disengage the racer from the tow vehicle in case of trouble. The majority of the towing is done at a pace slower than most of us walk at. The front of the race car is a deformable structure and is not strong enough to hold a tow hook.

☆U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1983 683—027/4

School Bus

DRIVERS:

- Do you keep your eyes moving and search the roadway ahead?
- Do you think about what you see and identify the hazards?
- Do you slow and prepare to stop when you see a schoolbus, whether or not local law requires it?
- Do you watch closely for pedestrians before sunrise and at dusk?

Pedestrian accidents around schoolbuses usually involve children aged 5 to 9. They may not remember to watch out for you. Please watch out for them.